

## Harvard University, Then and Now

### – From Christ as the Foundation to the Silence of Faith --

In 1643, the founders of Harvard College penned a mission statement for their new school, stating plainly that the ultimate aim of education was *“to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life”* (John 17:3). They declared that every student should be “earnestly pressed to consider well that the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ... and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.” For them, education was not merely about acquiring knowledge but about forming a life grounded in the saving truth of the gospel. Salvation preceded scholarship. Holiness came before success.

Harvard was founded not as a mere academic institution, but as a covenantal community where Christ-centered character formation and the pursuit of truth went hand in hand. To the Puritan founders—English-speaking Calvinists who had barely disembarked at Massachusetts Bay—building a college was an urgent, even sacred, task. For them, to study rightly was to worship rightly, and to train the mind was to shape the soul in Christ.

Today, however, Harvard stands in a very different place. It remains one of the most prestigious universities in the world, producing Nobel laureates, world leaders, and cutting-edge innovations. Yet its spiritual DNA has undergone a dramatic mutation. The words of John 17:3 no longer echo across the Yard. The name of Christ, once the cornerstone, is now a historical footnote.

In its current form, Harvard has become a secular global institution. Diversity and inclusion are celebrated, but often at the cost of excluding historic Christian truth. Faith is treated as a private, optional curiosity rather than the foundation of knowledge. Theology—especially one that claims absolute truth—is often viewed with suspicion or even disdain. In some classrooms, Christianity is deconstructed as a relic of oppression, and the very gospel that once birthed the university is now seen by many as a barrier to progress.

None of this is to deny Harvard’s academic brilliance. It continues to shine as a beacon of intellectual excellence. But we must ask: excellence toward what end? Knowledge has increased, but has wisdom kept pace? The quest for truth remains, but where does it lead if Christ is no longer at the center?

Harvard’s story is not unique. Many of the world’s top universities began with Christian foundations—Oxford, Yale, Princeton, Edinburgh only to abandon them in pursuit of secular prestige. The pattern is painfully familiar: spiritual passion gives way to academic pride, and eventually to a sterile neutrality that dares not speak the name above all names.

Yet even in this landscape, there are those who still dream of a new kind of Harvard one where Christ is once again the foundation of all learning. They labor quietly but faithfully to establish schools where truth is not untethered from the gospel, and where education remains a holy calling. This is the battle we must not forget. True higher education begins with the fear of the Lord. All knowledge, to be whole, must one day kneel before the truth that is not abstract, but incarnate.

As the Vice Chancellor of UAUT, I earnestly pray that our university will become such a "new Harvard" for Tanzania. I believe with all my heart that UAUT/UATC are called to embody the original vision of Harvard's founders right here in Dar es Salaam. A university where Christ is not an afterthought, but the cornerstone. A campus where learning and discipleship walk hand in hand. A community where young minds are formed not only for worldly success but for eternal significance. May God fulfill this dream. May He use UAUT/UATC to raise up a new generation of scholar-disciples, rooted in grace, truth, and the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Sung Soo Kim (Vice Chancellor, The United African University of Tanzania)